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By Phil Parker

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Health care reform advocates are trumpeting the potential to insure 96 percent of Americans — but who is going to take care of them?

More people with health coverage likely means a greater demand for medical care, and that means we'll need more doctors.

Dr. Dan Derksen, a family physician at the University of New Mexico, has been on sabbatical over the past year to work with Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., to come up with legislative approaches to train more general practice physicians to handle a potential boom in patients.

Consider: In New Mexico, according to the consumer health advocacy group Families USA, about 79 percent of residents have health insurance, the least in any state except Texas.

If that 79 percent skyrockets to 96 percent, suddenly 240,000 more people will have coverage — and may be looking for a doctor.

Derksen was standing behind Rep. Ben Ray Luján, D-N.M., on Monday at a brief news conference at Luján's office on St. Michael's Drive. Two days after voting in favor of the Affordable Health Care for America Act, which passed the House 220-215, Luján lauded the bill as a deficit-reducer that will help children, seniors and everyone in between.

Denial of insurance coverage on the basis of preexisting conditions, Luján said, “is all gone once the president signs this bill.” The Senate, however, still has to consider the measure.

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